



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 16 July 2024 at 4.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

A Davis  
W G Lewis  
S Pritchard

**Councillor(s)**

E W Fitzgerald  
P N May  
R C Stewart

**Councillor(s)**

M Jones  
F D O'Brien

**Statutory Co-opted Member(s)**

Beth Allender Elizabeth Lee

**Councillor Co-opted Member(s)**

C A Holley L R Jones

**Officer(s)**

Chris Howell	Head of Waste, Cleansing & Parks
Samantha Jenkins	Democratic Services Officer
Adrian Jeremiah	Lead Lawyer
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader
Rhian Millar	Consultation Co-ordinator
Matthew Perkins	Group Leader Waste Management
Mark Wade	Director of Place
Lee Wenham	Head of Communications, Corporate Planning & Performance

**Also present:**

Councillor R C Stewart – Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy.

Councillor C Anderson - Cabinet Member for Community - Services

Councillor H Gwilliam – Cabinet Member for Community - Support

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Co-opted Members: P R Hood-Williams, M H Jones and S M Jones

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**4 Disclosure of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

## **5 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

## **6 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committees held on 14 May and 16 May 2024 be approved and signed as correct records.

## **7 Public Question Time.**

There were no public questions.

## **8 Role of the Scrutiny Programme Committee.**

The Chair presented the report to ensure that everyone was clear about the role of the Committee, being the first meeting of the municipal year.

Committee agreement was sought to continue the co-option of:

- Performance Panel Conveners not already on the Committee, for the year ahead;and
- representatives from partner agencies to assist with the Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board, for those meetings only

The report also encouraged Committee discussion about effective working.

It was noted that Cllr Mary Jones had earlier that day been appointed as Convener of the Climate Change & Nature Performance Panel, replacing Cllr Sara Keeton.

**Resolved** that: -

- 1) The co-option of Scrutiny Performance Panels conveners to the Committee be renewed.
- 2) The co-option of partnership organisations to enable representatives to participate in the Committee's scrutiny of the Public Services Board be renewed.

## **9 Cabinet Member Questions - Recycling / Waste Collection Service.**

The Cabinet Member for Community (Services) and the Leader of the Council assisted by the Director of Place, Head of Waste, Parks & Cleansing and Group Leader Waste Management, discussed the Recycling / Waste Collection Service.

They provided an explanation of the recent collection issues that have impacted the City & County, and update on how issues are being addressed.

It was highlighted that there were 120 operational staff undertaking 2,020 collections per week. Swansea had one the highest recycling performances and lowest cost per

household. Despite recent issues, Quarter One Performance Monitoring remained well above 70% and slightly above the performance compared to last year.

There were currently 12 vacancies which had been as a result of retirement and staff leaving the service. Absences had occurred over the last three months due to holidays, sickness, lack of agency staff and driving staff. This had resulted in some rounds not being collected until the following day and figures suggested that on average two rounds per week had been delayed over the last few weeks.

A recruitment process was scheduled for next week and it was anticipated that a further pool of 20 staff members would be employed to cover staff absences which would result in less resilience on agency staff. The total number of staff to be recruited was 32.

Committee questioning and discussion focussed on the following:

- Staffing – timescales associated with new employees commencing duties would vary. However, many of the applicants had experience working in the services as agency staff.
- Staffing / Changes to working practices/employment issues – details would need to be discussed in private session. The Council was aiming to return to a position where agency staff were not relied upon.
- Delayed / missed collections – whilst the average was two missed collections per week in some cases portions of the complete round were incomplete due to, for example an increase in the volume of waste (e.g. grass cuttings) and staff members being taken ill during the shift.
- Vehicle Breakdowns – Officers would provide the Committee with details of breakdowns within the last five weeks.
- Benchmarking with other Local Authorities – Swansea was experiencing similar workforce issues to other local authorities.
- Agency Staff – Staff sickness, mechanical breakdowns and holidays required the use of agency staff.
- Communication between collection and cleansing services – work would be undertaken to streamline cleansing services in response to missed collections.
- Availability of refuse lorries – whilst there were available refuse lorries, the lack of trained driving staff remained a challenge.
- Calculating missed rounds – rounds undertaken on the following day, therefore delaying the scheduled round, would be calculated as two missed rounds.

- Residents marking recycling receptacles – a suggestion was made to promote the numbering / marking of receptacles (e.g. food bins) to promote resident ownership and help reduce costs associated with having to replace misplaced bins, etc.

Committee Members placed on record their thanks for the Waste Management team.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Community (Services), the Leader of the Council, the Director of Place, Head of Waste, Parks & Cleansing and the Group Leader for their input.

**Resolved** that:

- 1) The Committee conduct further questioning in private session at the conclusion of the main agenda items.
- 2) the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Community (Services) reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

## **10 Follow Up: Scrutiny Working Group - Co-production.**

The Cabinet Member for Community (Support) and the Leader of the Council assisted by the Head of Communications, Corporate Planning & Performance, and Consultation Co-ordinator, provided an update of the delivery of the Co-production Project and Strategy for Swansea Council. This was in response to the Committee following up on the Scrutiny Working Group meeting on Co-production in March 2023.

Committee questioning and discussion focussed on what has happened since the Working Group meeting to develop the use of Co-production across the Council.

Members noted that the Council's Co-production Project, in collaboration with Co-production Lab Wales, has made significant strides in embedding a culture of co-production; the learning phase identified existing good practices and areas for improvement, while the Co-production Champions Network and comprehensive training sessions equipped staff with the necessary skills and knowledge; the development of a Corporate Co-production Policy and a practical toolkit further supports the Council's commitment to an increase of the use of co-productive approaches across the Council. It was noted that some Council services would not be appropriate for Co-production.

The Committee was told that an annual report will be produced detailing the development of Co-production across the Council, to be reported to the Council's Strategic Equality Board which will monitor things. The Committee requested that this be circulated to all Members of the Council for their awareness.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Community (Support), the Leader of the Council, the Head of Communications & Marketing and the Consultation Co-ordinator for their input.

**Resolved that:**

- 1) the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Community (Support) reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.
- 2) The topic be re-examined by the Committee in 12 months with case studies that show examples of the use of Co-production within the Council.

**11 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.**

In addition to the written report, it was noted that Cllr Brigitte Rowlands would also be coming off the Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance Performance Panel.

**Resolved** that the membership changes reported in relation to Panels and Working Groups be agreed.

**12 Scrutiny Letters.**

The Chair referred to the following letters, reflecting on recent Scrutiny activity:

- Committee – Crime & Disorder Scrutiny (Safer Swansea Partnership) – 16 April - Letter to Joint Chairs of the Safer Swansea Partnership.
- Scrutiny Working Group – Community Growing – 13 May - Letter to / from Cabinet Members for Community (Services) and Well-being
- Committee – Swansea Public Services Board – 14 May - Letter to Chair of Swansea Public Services Board
- Committee – Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023-24 / Review of Welsh Language Strategy 2017-22 – 14 May - Letter to Cabinet Members for Education & Learning and Culture, Human Rights & Equalities

The report referred to the outcome from the recent Community Growing Scrutiny Working Group which was being reported back to the Committee in order that Members can note the Working Group's findings / conclusions and Cabinet Member's response. The Committee will be responsible for following up on this topic in the next year.

**13 Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25.**

The Chair stated that following consultation, including the recent Scrutiny Work Planning Conference, the report contained a proposed Work Programme for the year ahead.

The Draft Work Programme showed the proposed Inquiry Panel and Working Groups that would be established for the year ahead, Performance Panel arrangements, and topics which the Committee itself will lead on. A Draft plan for future Committee meetings was also shown. The Work Programme document also showed the coverage of topics across Cabinet portfolios and links to Council priorities (Corporate Well-being Objectives), which were important considerations.

He highlighted the following:

- In-depth Inquiry Panel – There is capacity to support 1 in-depth Inquiry per year. Once the current Community Assets Inquiry is concluded, the next Inquiry would be on 'Grants' – whilst exact Terms of Reference and Key Question will be agreed by the Inquiry Panel, there are concerns about the visibility of Grants as part of overall Council budget and a desire to shine a light on the significance of Grants, what they are, processes, and how well they are being used, etc.
- One-off Working Groups – Working Group topics have been identified, focussing in turn on 'Empty Properties', 'Public Engagement', 'Agile Working' and 'Tree Services'.
- Performance Panel arrangements would be unchanged from last year. Each Performance Panel will have its own work plan, developed by the Convener / Members and agreed by the Panel. but the Programme showed some of the topics which should be considered within their work plans.

Subject to agreement, expressions of interest would then be sought from Scrutiny Councillors to participate in new Scrutiny activities, and reported back to the Committee.

He referred to the next Committee meeting, taking place on 17 September, and as part of Committee sessions looking at Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities, arrangements were being made for the Committee to focus on 'Homelessness' and 'Streetscene Improvements' for this meeting, with relevant Cabinet Members and officer(s) attending to report on these matters and respond to questions and discussion.

**Resolved** that:

- 1) The Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024/25 including new Inquiry topic, Performance Panel arrangements, and Working Group topic priorities be approved.
- 2) The Committee Work Plan be approved.

#### **14 Date and Time of Upcoming Panel / Working Group Meetings.**

The Chair referred upcoming Panel/Working Group/Regional Scrutiny meetings, for awareness.

#### **15 Exclusion of the Public.**

The Committee was requested to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business identified in the recommendations to the report on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the exclusion paragraph of 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation)(Wales) Order 2007, relevant to the item of business as set out in the report.

The Committee considered the Public Interest Test in deciding to exclude the public from the meeting for the items of business where the Public Interest Test was relevant, as set out in the report.

**Resolved** that the public be excluded for the following items of business.

**(Closed Session)**

**16 Cabinet Member Questions - Recycling / Waste Collection Service.**

The Committee asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services), the Leader of the Council and Officers who responded accordingly.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm

**Chair**